

Mr. WYDEN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. KENNEDY). Without objection, it is so ordered.

CONCLUSION OF MORNING BUSINESS

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Morning business is closed.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate will proceed to executive session and resume consideration of the following nomination, which the clerk will report.

The legislative clerk read the nomination of Britt Cagle Grant, of Georgia, to be United States Circuit Judge for the Eleventh Circuit.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Oregon.

PRESIDENTIAL TAX TRANSPARENCY LEGISLATION

Mr. WYDEN. Mr. President, the Senate is approaching the end of the debate on a significant piece of spending legislation that includes funding for the Internal Revenue Service. That is why I have come to the floor this morning to discuss one of my amendments to this legislation, which is based on a bill that I have authored, entitled the Presidential Tax Transparency Act.

It is long past time for the President's tax returns to be released to the American people. This President has, in effect, thrown in the trash can a bipartisan, 40-year, pro-transparency tradition in his having refused to release his tax returns in the course of the 2016 election. This had been a tradition accepted by all liberals and conservatives across the political spectrum that had dated back to the post-Watergate era. The President has ended it for reasons as flimsy as you can get—a made-up story about the President's claim that you can't release your returns in the course of an audit.

Yet now it is not just a matter of the President's destroying a four-decades', good-government campaign tradition. Week after week, month after month, there are more questions that swirl about with respect to financial ties that might skew the President's decision-making about new foreign deals. The Trump Organization continues to strike that violate the promises the President made to the American people—about foreign cash coming into his properties here in the United States; about the astronomical amount of cash taxpayers spend to fund the President's many visits to Trump-branded properties, essentially forcing the American people to finance Trump resort ad campaigns.

The episode that left more jaws on the floor than perhaps any other came

a few weeks ago. That is when the President traveled through Europe for what should have been routine meetings with our longstanding allies. Instead, the President attacked our closest allies and put on a performance, while standing next to Vladimir Putin, that few will soon forget. With a hostile dictator at his side, the President said that the United States was "foolish," and he threw our intelligence officials under the bus and refused once again to accept the conclusion that Russia interfered with our 2016 election. The cleanup he tried to do a few days later, in my view, was laughable at best.

Following that meeting in Helsinki, people across the Nation were left to wonder: Does Vladimir Putin have something on the President? Does the President simply prefer dictators and strongmen to democratically elected leaders, or does Putin have information or financial influence that he is exploiting?

There was also the mystery of why this administration, which seems to stumble from decision to decision, sprang into action to save ZTE—a company that is a Chinese serial sanctions violator and a tech company that the experts will tell you is a threat to our national security. In an open hearing of the Intelligence Committee and in response to my question, Mr. Evanina—the new point person for the whole question of counterintelligence and counterterrorism—said that he still regarded ZTE as an espionage threat.

For all of the President's tough talk about enforcing sanctions on countries that pose a threat to Americans, letting ZTE off the hook after it violated sanctions against Iran and North Korea is just baffling. It certainly shows signs of weakness. The timing also raised eyebrows, as the ZTE deal came right after the Trump family secured valuable trademarks, and a Trump project in Indonesia got a \$500 million loan from a Chinese state-owned company.

These looming questions are yet another reason the American people should not be asked to wait any longer for a chance to see what every other President has offered in the last four decades—his tax returns. The American people deserve to see those returns and see if some of the "almost impossible to explain" Presidential judgments over the last few weeks have been due to what may be in those returns.

So let's be clear. The financial ties between the President, The Trump Organization, and Russia could be well hidden deep within the Trump web of business entities. Releasing the tax returns, at least, is a start with respect to accountability and transparency in the long-held tradition Presidents have followed.

Unfortunately, for the interests of the American people, debate on the legislation before us has now been cut off. That means that my amendment, which would call for the disclosure of

these tax returns and transparency and accountability, just as we have seen decade after decade, will not get a vote, but I intend to keep calling up this legislation for a full debate. I simply believe this issue is too important to ignore.

There is a reason we have had this tradition for four decades. This is the lowest ethical bar for a President. It is not a high one. It is the lowest ethical bar, and it is not being followed. Members on both sides ought to be interested in protecting good-government, pro-transparency traditions that stretch back decades.

What a lot of people have wondered is, why is legislation necessary here? I had held off for months in 2016 even talking about requiring this by legislation. I had just hoped that then-Candidate Trump would have done voluntarily what everybody else had done for four decades. When it was clear he wouldn't, I had said I didn't know of any other path to get the transparency and accountability the American people deserve other than through legislation like this.

Nobody in Congress ought to be in favor of keeping the American people in the dark about what is motivating the President's decision, and certainly all of us ought to be concerned about protecting against corruption. Helping Russia undermine NATO and letting sanctions violators—repeat sanctions violators—off the hook puts American interests in danger.

The public has a right to know the truth of what is behind those decisions. Certainly, a part of being able to make those judgments is having the chance—the opportunity—as we have seen for four decades, to see the President's tax returns.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The bill clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. CORNYN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. CRUZ). Without objection, it is so ordered.

NEW HOPE ACT

Mr. CORNYN. Mr. President, last week the House passed an important piece of legislation, the reauthorization of the Perkins Act. It was sent to the President's desk for his signature and, once that happens today, it will become the law of the land.

I want to take just a moment to talk about part of it because it has huge implications for my State and the United States. It is called the New HOPE Act, and it builds on other steps we have taken recently to strengthen our Nation's economy. Specifically, it deals with this phenomenon of occupational licensing.

State licensing mandates require men and women to pay fees, complete training programs, and pass exams before they can enter certain jobs and